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EU offers technical assistance on FATF action plan

ISLAMABAD: The European Union has offered technical assistance to Pakistan for implementation of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) action plan by the country. A joint press release issued at the conclusion of the tenth session of the European Union-Pakistan Joint Commission in Brussels on Friday says the two sides emphasised the importance of the implementation of FATF action plan by Pakistan.

The Pakistan side at the meeting appreciated the EU's offer of technical assistance.

Implementation of 'GSPPlus', issues hampering trade and investment, and improving the business climate remained focus of the discussion during the meeting. On development cooperation, the EU and Pakistan appreciated the encouraging progress of ongoing activities and exchanged views on priorities concerning cooperation beyond 2020.

The plenary of the joint commission was preceded by meetings of sub-groups on trade, development cooperation, democracy, governance, rule of law and human rights on Nov 13-14.

During the sub-group on democracy, governance, rule of law and human rights, the two sides reaffirmed their strong support for democratic institutions, rule of law, good governance, the promotion and protection of human rights, labour rights, and fundamental freedoms, according to the press release.

Pakistan briefed the EU side on the recent developments in the region and highlighted its concerns regarding human rights and the humanitarian situation in India-held Jammu and Kashmir.

The joint commission provided an opportunity to both sides to exchange views on areas of cooperation. The two sides appreciated the signing of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) in June 2019 and expressed commitment for its early and complete implementation including the establishment of a Security Dialogue, working towards a comprehensive dialogue on migration and mobility, and further expanding relations in the areas of connectivity, climate change and energy, education and culture, and science and technology.

The parties discussed different aspects of migration management, highlighted the importance of full and effective implementation of the EU-Pakistan Readmission Agreement (EUPRA), underlining that the Readmission Case Management System (RCMS) was of high importance in this regard.

The EU recognised the challenges faced by Pakistan in handling the most protracted refugee situation, and assured the country of continuation of its cooperation and assistance, working towards durable solutions for Afghan refugees and their host communities in the region, including the promotion of voluntary, safe, and dignified return to Afghanistan.

The two sides also agreed to pay increased attention to the humanitarian response to natural disasters.

The joint commission was cochaired on the EU side by Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific in the European External Action Service Gunnar Wiegand and on the Pakistan side, by Economic Affairs Division Secretary Noor Ahmed.

Representatives of the European Commission, observers from EU member states, as well as from Pakistan ministries of foreign affairs, commerce, economic affairs division and human rights attended the meeting.

The next session of the joint commission will be held in Islamabad in 2020. The two sides undertook to hold the next political dialogue in Islamabad that would contribute towards the EU-Pakistan strategic dialogue at high representative and foreign minister level at mutually agreed dates in Brussels.